

Sept. 1, '81

Dear Alan,

I just received your letter and I am glad you wrote about some interesting Dhamma conversations with Khun Sujin. I will now copy part of it for the sake of some other people who are interested, give some background information and comments. I can imagine you miss Thailand, but is it not so that we want what we do not have? I am in an exotic country, but I miss good old plain Holland with its wind and rain, I miss the seasons. It is interesting to understand the cause of our feelings and thoughts, and to know what ~~are~~ our experiences are. We may not like certain situations like being in a noisy city (Jakarta). We think that if we go to another place it will be better. We cannot escape vipaka, it is conditioned already. It will not <sup>be</sup> any better, there will be other unpleasant experiences at another place. And if the place is pleasant, will we ever be satisfied? There will always be objects for lobha and dosa, wherever we are. Thus, as you also will agree, the place is not so important, but the ~~sikkha~~ ~~are~~ javana cittas are. And good there can be moments of sati, it is so urgent. What is the use to experience all these experiences with ignorance, without understanding?

You wrote that you discussed resolution to develop satipaṭṭhana. Now some background information. 'Resolution' is one of the perfections the Bodhisatta developed in his many lives and which was a necessary factor in order to attain Buddhahood. We discussed this perfection very often with Khun Sujin when we were on pilgrimage in India. It is the resolution to develop right understanding of the reality which appears now. It is not resolution for something we are going to do in the future, it has to be now, otherwise it is not the right resolution, it will not help. We read in the Commentary to the Cariyāpitika that the Bodhisatta encountered many troubles, things hard to endure, injuries and inflictions, but he was unshakable in his resolution to continue developing right understanding at the present moment. He said: 'Whatever comes, let it come'. This is something we can apply when we are in difficult circumstances, being in a strange country, or not knowing what to do as regards work we are looking for. What matters most? We often forget, but if we realize that it takes many lives to develop a little more understanding of the reality appearing now, we see that it is urgent to begin now, in spite of the many troubles we encounter. Now I quote what you wrote, and really, if we all can have such experiences that we forget to be determined as to satipaṭṭhana.

'Our afternoon with Adjaan was very relaxed indeed, sitting around on the floor discussing the harsh realities of life in a very realistic down-to-earth way. Here are a couple of things Adjaan said that I took particular notice of--not that it was anything new, but I found it helpful at a time. The first thing was that without cultivating the resolution to develop satipatthana, the situation is hopeless. I realized profoundly the weakness of my own resolution in this matter--the lack of a strong focus or direction towards what I really went out of life. I tend to 'float' to the degree that I most certainly not conducive to development--there is not yet the necessary commitment in this life. Still, it's not hopeless; hearing the right thing at the right time often enough leads to a sense of urgency, a resolution of aims and energies, and...sati.'

You remember that Khun Sujin also spoke about resolution one of the last evening I was in Bangkok and you came along? I enjoyed this reminder, we all go along with the situations in life instead of seeing the urgency of sati now. Being reminded of the Bodhi tree and persevered for so many, many lives, is certainly inspiring. It is good to know how slowly understanding develops; slowly we have to notice my progress, and we always cling to small results. That is not realistic. Six worlds, no matter how small the object is, no matter how tired or lazy. There we are, we are on the way while sitting, was the resolution of the mind. When we are in the process of seeing passed, no resolution. This happens time and again. Many moments of sound. Is there any resolution to be aware right now? I continue with you letter now:

The second thing was the need to be oneself, not to place too much store perhaps on what people are going to think of us if they are aware of all our weaknesses for example; to be open and natural; as we are. When there is some resolution, then, in spite of other weaknesses, faults and failings and various embarrassing sides of our nature, we can progress, whatever the rest of the world thinks of us.

It is true we want to be admired and liked and this is lobha. It is useful to know our own weaknesses, they are conditioned realities. Khun Sujin often emphasizes to be natural, to be oneself. This is possible even with the job my husband holds. Since we are representing our country we have to consider other people's feelings, we have to think of other people's opinions, but that can be done with kusala citta; to be considerate for others is wholesome.

I do not feel constrained in the diplomatic life. Thus, it all depends on the situation. When we care for other people's matters most. With metta.